

The Worthy LIVERYMEN of the City of London.

GENTLEMEN.

OF all the events which have happened since my memory, and probably since the foundation of this constitution, this of Mr. Wilkes's offering himself a candidate to represent you in Parliament, appears the most astonishing and atrocious.—

An Outlaw presumes to aspire to the obtaining the most important of all trusts, the being delegated to preserve and to defend the laws, liberties, and privileges of that state, of which he is no longer a member, and from which he himself can derive neither benefit nor protection.

This proceeding he would not have attempted, without having previously received encouragement from some among you: let me therefore dispassionately lay before you the real state of this affair; we shall then see whether he deserves this signal instance of their attachment to his cause, and how far they are justifiable in supporting a man in such a situation.

In delineating the portraiture of this transaction, I will derive no advantage from the circumstances of his prosecution; that it was a libel against the King himself, nor that this act was aggravated by the heinous offence of publicly blaspheming his God; I shall not enquire into private characters, nor take notice of notes of hand being burned before the face of that person to whom they were given and were due, nor lay open various other circumstances which certainly express an impropriety in the electing such men, to protect the religion, rights, properties, and liberties, of the people of England. I will consider him only as he stands, an Outlaw, and by what means he became so.

Mr. Wilkes being expelled the House of Commons, and prosecuted for a libel; instead of abiding the judgment of the laws, and putting himself to the test of guilt or innocence, before a Jury of his countrymen, secretly withdrew himself from the kingdom, and remained a fugitive. He was then tried and found guilty, according to law, and after a regular proceeding according to the forms of the legislature, and his not appearing to the summons, as it was the indispensable duty of every subject to have done, he was proclaimed an Outlaw, deprived of the benefit of the laws, and rescinded from the king's protection.

Hence it manifestly appears, that by not awaiting the arbitration and judgment of his Peers in a legal trial, he confessed himself guilty of the crime with which he was charged; and, self convicted, fled that sentence, which he was conscious he deserved, and which he foresaw must be pronounced against him; and thus he himself became the real cause of his being a banished man. What approbation and encouragement then does that man deserve, who pretending to support the laws of his country, is the first to fly from the examination and to avoid the decision of them? Can you believe that the care of the constitution, or the protection of your rights and privileges, have at any time formed the least motive to his conduct? If you do, it is not more absurd to believe, that water will burn, and fire extinguish conflagrations; and it would be

no less ridiculous to apply them in these ways, than to select such a man the guardian of your rights and privileges. No man can be a friend to liberty, who flies from the inquest of those laws by which it is protected.

Had he remained in England, and, with becoming fortitude, awaited a solemn trial of his actions before his Peers; had he surrendered himself, after sentence of being found guilty, into the hands of the civil Magistrate; and proved, that, though he had erred in his judgment, his heart was not mistaken; and that he was willing to wear away the imputation of offence by the atonement of his punishments; he had behaved like a true, though a mistaken subject: had there appeared any sinister means to obtain a verdict against him; had power interfered to inflame the infliction of the laws, he might then have been the just object of your compassion, favour and support; but neither of all these is to be alledged in his defence; he fled from law, self-convicted and self-banished. The only punishment which has yet been pronounced against him, is that which he has pronounced against himself; and to that alone he is indebted for his being deprived of the benefit of the law, and protection of the realm. Now then, is this man the proper object of an Englishman's support, who has no person against whom he can complain but himself?

I know not which appears the most astonishing either his offering himself a candidate to represent you in Parliament, or that countenance and encouragement which he has received from some among you!—An outlaw, divested of every right and privilege of a subject, has the hardiness to presume to the obtaining that honour and confidence, which are the most supreme of all rights and privileges of an Englishman. An insatuated multitude daring to support him in such an undertaking, bids defiance to the laws and the constitution, according to which he cannot be elected.

Was it a Minister, or the whole Privy Council, against whom both he and his friends denounce such open defiance, I could ascribe it to the aversion which they may entertain against such men: was it against the King himself, to whom this insult was offered, it might be imputed to the present rage of Republican principles, which so strongly influences the hearts, and blinds the understandings of too many; but when the affront is offered to the laws, to whose sacred obligations, in the formation of which the whole kingdom has united; by which life, liberty, property, right, and privilege are preserved; though it may not be, legally and strictly all, it is certainly, virtually, a rebellion; and that of the most criminal and atrocious kind: and most assuredly, when those who have engaged in this undertaking have reflected on the true nature of the subject, they will repent of their atrocious misdeeds; they will shew that they respect the laws, by deserting the support of a fugitive outlaw, and return to that duty which they owe the legislature and the constitution.

LEGIS AMATOR.

